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AUTHOR Phillips, Deborah, Ed.; Bridgman, Anne, Ed.
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ABSTRACT

In April 1996 the Board on Children, Youth, and Families and the Family and Child Well-Being Research Network convened their second annual research briefing on welfare and children's development. The briefing was intended to: (1) create a venue for productive exchange between researchers and policy makers; (2) maximize the usefulness of research in helping decision makers; and (3) encourage more assessments of children's development and family processes in efforts to track and evaluate welfare reform. The complicating effects of social conditions make it difficult to determine whether welfare itself creates problems for children or whether children would fare poorly in these families even if they did not receive welfare. Research presented at the briefing explores, but does not resolve this question, and introduces others regarding the timing of welfare receipt, the conditions associated with long-term effects, and the factors that contribute to intergenerational welfare receipt. Research was also presented that suggests that children's development is not compromised when their mothers combine employment and welfare receipt. Unresolved is the question of how children would fare when mothers' work is mandated and welfare benefits are terminated. Researchers and state welfare administrators also discussed efforts to assess child outcomes and to derive lessons from state welfare reforms. Their efforts make it clear that there are many issues to consider as states move toward welfare-to-work programs. (Contains 2 tables, 2 figures, and 43 references.) (SLD)

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New Findings on Welfare and Children's Development

Summary of a Research Briefing

Deborah Phillips and Anne Bridgman, *Editors*

Board on Children, Youth, and Families

Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education
National Research Council

Institute of Medicine

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NOTICE: The project that is the subject of this report was approved by the Governing Board of the National Research Council, whose members are drawn from the councils of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine. The members of the committee responsible for the report were chosen for their special competences and with regard for appropriate balance.

This report has been reviewed by a group other than the authors according to procedures approved by a Report Review Committee consisting of members of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine.

Support for this project was provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Foundation for Child Development, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Family and Child Well-Being Research Network of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For a list of members of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families, see page 26.
For a list of participants at the research briefing on welfare and children's development, see page 27.
For a list of other reports of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families, see page 29.

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Welfare reform is taking place across the United States. Driven by rising costs and caseloads, changes in the make-up of families receiving benefits, and revised expectations regarding work effort among the poor, income support policies for families in poverty are undergoing sweeping changes. The centerpiece of these policies—the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program—was established in 1935 to ensure that major losses in family income, then due primarily to death or disablement of the father, did not leave children destitute. The basic strategy of guaranteeing benefits to eligible poor American families has changed from one that was originally designed to enable single mothers to stay home with their children to one that requires those mothers to work.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (Title I: Block Grants for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), the major change at the federal level, replaces the entitlement status of AFDC with an annual lump-sum payment to the states and a maximum five-year time limit on benefits. At the same time, the majority of states are also redesigning the basic provisions of their AFDC programs that govern who receives benefits, under what conditions, and for how long.

The immediate goal of most state reforms is to move families from welfare to jobs, and hence, to reduce AFDC costs. However, the long-term effectiveness of these efforts depends, in part, on ending intergenerational poverty and welfare dependency. To achieve this goal requires advancing understanding of the effects of welfare and welfare reforms on children's development.

In April 1996 the Board on Children, Youth, and Families (of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine) and the Family and Child Well-Being Research Network (of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) convened their second annual research briefing on welfare and children's development. The briefing had three objectives:

- to create a venue for a productive exchange between researchers and policy makers who are working on issues of child development and welfare;
- to maximize the usefulness of research in helping decision makers "learn as we go" during the current phase of experimentation in welfare reform; and
- to encourage more assessments of children's development and family processes in efforts to track and evaluate welfare reform at all levels of government.

Most of the research presented at the workshop addressed the question of how children and youth are affected by growing up in families that receive welfare benefits, primarily AFDC.[1]

[1]The definitions of welfare varied in the research presented—from AFDC receipt to a host of means-tested assistance programs (e.g., food stamps); generally, it did not include medical assistance.

Possible Effects of Welfare

There are numerous ways that receiving welfare may affect children's development (Zaslow et al., 1994). The cash payments provided by AFDC may allow mothers to provide better environments for their children (through better food, housing, clothing, etc.) than they could without such assistance. Alternatively, if a parent could both earn more income and provide a constructive role model to her children through employment than by receiving AFDC, welfare may deprive children of beneficial resources and experiences.

AFDC receipt may also have noneconomic effects. If, for example, the alternative to receiving AFDC is child care of substandard quality, then the additional time in maternal care that AFDC receipt permits may offer a better alternative for children. However, if welfare receipt discourages marriage or otherwise compromises family stability, then its developmental effects may be negative.

Welfare receipt, as these examples illustrate, can plausibly have both positive and negative effects. The net effect on children depends on whether the positive effects outweigh the negative ones. Identifying and measuring those effects is the key task of research on welfare and children's development. However, the ability to test theories about the causal role of AFDC receipt in children's development is seriously constrained by the limitations of available data.

The central challenge associated with this area of research is that of selection effects.

Selection effects occur because low-income families that receive AFDC are not the same as low-income families that do not receive AFDC. For example, in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)—a data set commonly used to study poverty, welfare, and child development—mothers in AFDC families had their first children at a younger age and had completed less education than mothers in non-AFDC families; in addition, AFDC families had lower marital and employment rates than non-AFDC women; see Table 1 (Moore and Driscoll, 1996). Other unmeasured differences between these groups may include worse health and mental health, fewer job skills, and higher levels of conflict in the home for the families receiving AFDC, as well as a host of other factors that are often not explicitly measured.

These differences make it extremely difficult to ascertain whether welfare itself creates problems for children, or whether children would fare poorly in these families even if they didn't receive welfare because of other factors that distinguish AFDC families. It seems likely that the selection effects themselves are most likely to tip the scales toward negative findings for welfare receipt: that is, for two women objectively similar in age, education, and family background, it is likely that the one who has received more education and training and has more initiative and better life-coping skills is more

Table 1

Differences Between AFDC Families and Non-AFDC Families

Family Characteristics	Receipt of AFDC: Never on Welfare	Receipt of AFDC: Ever on Welfare
Mother's age at first birth	20.6 years	19.0 years
Mother's education	12.1 years of schooling completed	11.0 years of schooling completed
Mother's marital status in 1992	81.2 percent married	48.0 percent married
Mother's employment status in 1992	68.3 percent employed	45.5 percent employed
Years in poverty, 1986-1991	0.8 years	3.5 years

SOURCE: Data from Moore and Driscoll (1996).

likely to have better labor market opportunities, and thus, to work. If these qualities also make women better mothers, then selection effects will make welfare look bad for children. Because none of the results in this report is based on research that used random assignment,[2] selection effects must always be considered as an alternative interpretation of the results.

Without careful efforts to separate the effects of welfare from selection effects that co-occur with welfare receipt, public policies run the risk of failure. If, for example, it is mothers' lower education levels and life skills—rather than the fact that they receive welfare—that are the more potent influences on children's development, then policies focused on removing families from welfare that do not include efforts to improve mothers' education and competence will be mistargeted, and they may well be ineffective in the long run. If the underlying problems are those that are reflected in selection effects, solving them is much harder than just changing welfare programs.

Another challenge associated with efforts to understand the developmental consequences for children of receiving AFDC is the time frame of welfare receipt. Most families that receive welfare do so for brief, often sporadic, periods of time. Repeated spells on welfare are not unusual: for example, one-half of recipients stop receiving AFDC during the first year and three-quarters stop during the first 2 years (Greenberg, 1993; Pavetti, 1993). But many families

[2]In such research, similar poor women would be randomly assigned to receive welfare or not; for many legal, ethical, and methodological reasons, such research is very difficult to do, and it is just beginning to be done.

return relatively quickly—close to one-half return within 2 years of leaving (Pavetti, 1996; Harris, 1994). Overall, over time, only about one-third of women who ever receive welfare will receive assistance for longer than five years. Yet a very different picture of welfare emerges if one looks only at families currently receiving welfare: about 90 percent of those currently receiving assistance will eventually spend more than 2 years on AFDC, and 76 percent will receive welfare for longer than 5 years (Pavetti, 1996).

Trying to determine how welfare receipt affects the course of children's development is therefore complicated by the fact that any amount of time a child spends on welfare is likely to be embedded in sizable amounts of time spent not on welfare. So for many children, the effects of time on welfare will be confounded by the effects of time not on welfare over the course of their development. Trying to determine the effects of welfare is further complicated by the fact that many parents both receive AFDC and work. These patterns of welfare receipt highlight the need to understand how the *timing* of welfare receipt affects children's development.

How the Effects of Welfare Have Been Studied

As you read this report, it is critical to recognize that the data that are available for examining questions about welfare assistance, family income, and children's development were collected before the enactment of major changes in welfare policy, and they provide a fairly limited range of children's developmental outcomes for analysis. When these data were collected, families' decisions to go off welfare (or not to accept welfare) were voluntary. Under welfare reform, the situation is quite different. One cannot assume that families who are now involuntarily removed from welfare as a result of time limits or changes in eligibility criteria will have the same characteristics, behave in the same ways, or have children with the same outcomes as those found for nonrecipients who have been studied to date. It is also possible that families who continue to receive assistance amid the current reforms are more disadvantaged and require more intensive services than those who do not, and may differ from families who are on welfare in the current data sets.

The research presented at the April 1996 briefing dealt directly with these challenges to trying to understand how welfare affects children. The investigators used state-of-the-art methods to disentangle the developmental effects of welfare from other factors that characterize recipient families, looked at questions of the timing of welfare receipt and its effects, and drew on the large longitudinal studies that constitute the most sophisticated national data sets now available for analysis. Although the findings on the effects on children of welfare receipt vary by data set, age, and outcome mea-

sured, the research begins to increase understanding of for whom, when, and in what contexts welfare receipt affects children, with special attention to children's and youth's intellectual performance, behavior problems, school completion, and nonmarital birth rates.

The research briefing also included presentations of several current demonstrations involving random assignment that have the potential to provide major insights into the relative importance of welfare itself versus simple selection. These demonstrations are summarized in boxes that appear throughout this document.

This report is intended to supplement the literature on children and families living in poverty and receiving welfare, rather than to offer a comprehensive review of the research on family income, welfare, or poverty. It offers important, new, incremental evidence on these topics, from one of a series of research briefings of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families that present findings on various aspects of welfare and children's development.

The report is organized around the following three questions that emerged from the presentations and discussions at the briefing:

- What role does welfare receipt play in children's development?
- When and for whom does welfare have long-term impacts?
- How do children fare when their mothers combine work with welfare receipt?

The briefing also featured a rich discussion by state welfare administrators on assessing child outcomes in the context of evaluation and monitoring efforts. Comments from this discussion are presented in the last section of this report. Participants' ideas about topics that warrant further research are included at the end of each section.

Participants at the 1996 briefing echoed comments made at the 1995 briefing—that research has a critical role to play in sharpening understanding of the implications for children of changes in welfare and, more generally, of changes in families' economic status. But participants also cautioned against overstating the nature of the knowledge, and, in particular, were wary of the ability to make causal inferences about the relationship between welfare and children's development. Not only will it be critical to place the research presented at the briefing in the context of accumulated evidence based on different data and techniques, but it may also be necessary—due to the fast-moving pace of change—to modify the way research is carried out in order to measure the effects of the changes on children and to inform the continuing policy debate on welfare.

Demonstration Project
The JOBS Evaluation

The JOBS Evaluation seeks to compare the development of young children in families receiving AFDC whose mothers are randomly assigned to (1) participate in basic educational activities through the JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills) training program; (2) engage in job search activities through the JOBS program; or (3) be in a control group, not required to participate in JOBS activities. The JOBS Child Outcomes Study is being carried out by Child Trends, Inc., for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, and private foundations (Moore et al., 1996).

The JOBS Child Outcomes study involves evaluations of children's development 2 and 5 years after their mothers enrolled in the JOBS program. Development is examined in four areas: cognitive development and academic achievement, social relations, behavior problems, and health. The study will examine overall program effects on children, as well as effects for key subgroups, such as mothers with and without a high school diploma at the start of the evaluation, mothers who have been receiving welfare for shorter or longer periods of time. This study will examine not only child outcomes, but also a range of possible mechanisms by which participation in JOBS may affect children, including children's participation in child care arrangements of differing types and quality, changes in maternal education or family income, and changes in maternal psychological well-being.

The JOBS Child Outcomes Study is embedded in a larger study called the JOBS Evaluation, which is being carried out by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. The overall evaluation seeks to assess the impact of different approaches to the JOBS program (implemented in response to the Family Support Act of 1988) on increasing earnings and employment, job stability and self-sufficiency, increasing reading and math literacy skills and educational attainment, and reducing poverty and government expenditures. The JOBS Evaluation also examines the implementation of the JOBS program and compares different case management strategies.

WHAT ROLE DOES WELFARE RECEIPT PLAY IN CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT?

Many Americans are concerned about how children are affected by their parents' welfare receipt. It is commonly assumed that welfare, in and of itself, undermines the well-being and development of children. On economic grounds, some argue that receiving AFDC creates a disincentive to employment that exposes children to both lower household income and negative role models. Some also believe that welfare receipt affects noneconomic facets of family functioning, such as marriage, timing of childbearing, and the consistency and warmth of parenting in ways that expose children to potentially harmful circumstances. Research has addressed these issues by attempting to disentangle the influence of welfare receipt from that of poverty and other factors that characterize families that receive AFDC. This research is particularly critical because one of the rationales for moving families off welfare has been that such efforts will enhance children's development in both the short and long term.

Children on welfare have been found to have lower cognitive attainment and more behavior problems than other children (Duncan and Yeung, 1995; Moore and Driscoll, 1996; Santiago, 1995). However, the relationship between child outcomes and welfare receipt is clouded by the fact that, although not all poor children receive welfare, most children who live in welfare households are poor. Welfare and poverty are so closely intertwined, and it is extremely important to distinguish their independent effects on children. Doing so will answer the question of whether the relationships between welfare and negative child outcomes are due to welfare receipt, the poverty that accompanies welfare receipt, or some other factor.

Research presented at the briefing by Kristin Moore and Anne Driscoll of Child Trends, Inc. (Moore and Driscoll, 1996) assessed whether negative child outcomes related to welfare receipt are an effect of welfare dependency, a reflection of poverty, or due to some other factors that are associated with participation in welfare programs. The study used children's scores on behavior, reading, and math tests as measures of child outcomes.[1]

Children whose families received welfare were found to have more negative outcomes than other children. Moore and Driscoll found that welfare receipt is associated with worse reading, math, and behavior problem scores for white children and with worse reading scores for black children, but that

[1]The study is based on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth—Child Supplement (NLSY-CS). The sample consisted of 850 white and 554 African American children who ranged in age from 9 to 14 years in 1992.

Demonstration Project
The Canadian Self-Sufficiency Project

The Self-Sufficiency Project is a research demonstration project begun in 1992 designed to determine the effectiveness of an earnings supplement for single-parent Income Assistance (welfare) recipients in Canada who take jobs and agree to leave Income Assistance (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 1992). Project participants are randomly assigned to a program group or a control group. Eligible participants in the program group are offered an earnings supplement for a 3-year period. The offer is employment driven in that only those who work full time are eligible, and it is generous enough to make work financially preferable to continued receipt of income assistance.

The project seeks to determine to what extent eligible Income Assistance recipients respond to the supplement offer, what proportion of eligible recipients find jobs and receive a supplement, and whether there is variation across major population subgroups or under different labor market conditions. The study is designed to assess the effectiveness of the earnings supplement in enabling Income Assistance recipients to take jobs, earn more money, and become self-reliant. The project will also explore why some recipients refuse the supplement offer, identify the average wage and supplement payment in the jobs taken by project participants, and seek to determine what happens to participants at the end of the eligibility period.

The Self-Sufficiency Project is also designed to determine if participation in the program group has any effect on the well-being of children in participating families. Assessing the impact on children's well-being will be accomplished with cognitive tests and questionnaires completed by children in selected age groups and questionnaires completed by parents. These questionnaires and tests will provide information about a set of outcomes relating to the children's academic achievement and emotional and behavioral characteristics.

The project is funded by Human Resources Development Canada, a federal government department. A consortium of organizations is carrying out the project, including the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, Statistics Canada, the provincial Income Assistance agencies, and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. The project is being carried out in New Brunswick and British Columbia.

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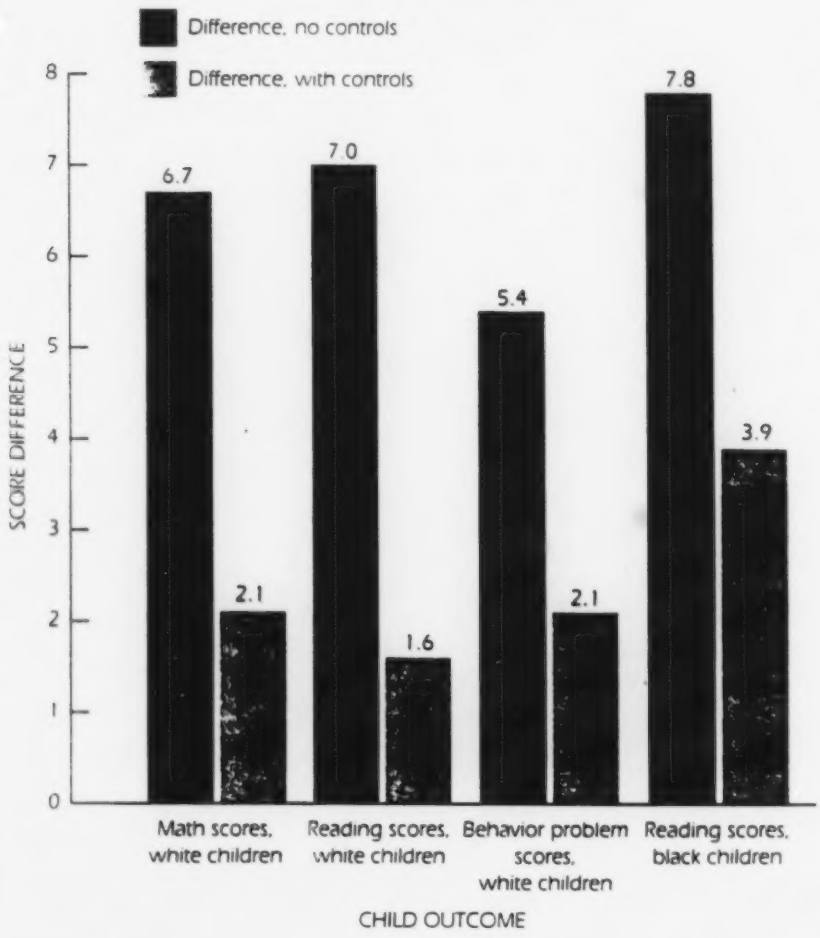
Figure 1
Differences in Scores Between Children Never on Welfare and Children Ever on Welfare



NOTE: Controls include child's age, sex, birth order; mother's marital, fertility, work histories, and educational attainment, and score on AFQT, length and depth of poverty; contextual factors.

SOURCE: Data from Moore and Driscoll (1996)

this relationship is weakened when demographic and background factors are held constant; see Figure 1. The factors included were the child's age, sex, and birth order and the mother's marital, fertility, and work histories, educational attainment, and score on the Armed Forces Qualifying Test. When length of time spent in poverty and depth of poverty and a variety of contextual factors (such as local rates of unemploy-

ment, families in poverty, and births to teenagers) are also taken into account, the magnitude of the negative associations between welfare and child outcomes is further reduced. For example, white children whose families have ever received welfare have math scores 6.7 points lower, on average, than white children whose families have never received welfare; after controlling for demographic and background factors, the difference is reduced to 2.1 points.

These findings can be interpreted as providing evidence that welfare receipt adversely affects children's development. It is equally plausible, however, that the reported relationships between welfare and child development are due to unmeasured ways in which the home environments of the AFDC children in Moore's and Driscoll's sample were less optimal than those of the children not on welfare, and that this—rather than welfare receipt—was the "true" cause of the differences in children's outcomes. In fact, a long-standing research literature (Corcoran, 1995; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, in press; Haveman and Wolfe, 1995; Hill and Duncan, 1987; Mayer, in press; Sameroff et al., 1987) has documented that children's development is compromised by a combination of factors—both economic and noneconomic—that operate in concert and tend to co-occur in low-income families. Moore's and Driscoll's research suggests that welfare receipt may well be one of these factors, particularly given that the study took into consideration an unusually large number of selection factors.

Efforts to distinguish welfare from selection effects hinge, in part, on explaining the alternatives that would face these families if they were simply removed from welfare. In some cases, the best a given mother could do off of welfare would involve stable, economically viable employment and a stable marriage or partnership; in others, it would involve very sporadic and poorly paid employment and no marriage or an unstable marriage. These disparate alternatives would likely have very different ramifications for the children involved. The challenge, then, for research and policy is to try to determine those factors that predispose families toward improved or deteriorating circumstances if they do not receive welfare.

The research presented at the briefing raises additional questions. Would the findings be the same in the context of mandated time limits for welfare receipt, which are likely to affect the characteristics of families on welfare and not on welfare? What other factors—such as the timing of welfare receipt—are important to consider in understanding the role of welfare in the lives of children? What aspects of the social and economic context within which families are embedded need to be considered in future studies of the effects of welfare on children's development? What additional indicators of children's well-being need to be assessed to more fully understand the effects of welfare receipt and welfare reform on children and families?

WHEN AND FOR WHOM DOES WELFARE HAVE LONG-TERM IMPACTS?

The immediate focus of most reform efforts is adult employment. But concerns about the detrimental effects of welfare for children are also a prominent aspect of today's debates, particularly insofar as they involve long-term and intergenerational effects. Speculations about the mechanisms that account for possible long-term effects of welfare receipt focus primarily on the transmission of expectations regarding adult roles and access to resources that facilitate the attainment of economic independence. For example, children who grow up in families that have histories of sporadic or no work are thought to acquire low aspirations regarding their own employment prospects and thus to make life choices about schooling and childbearing that may actually constrain the economic options available to them in young adulthood. Research into this complex set of questions that was presented at the briefing addressed the timing of welfare receipt and of its effects, the conditions associated with long-term effects, and the factors that contribute to intergenerational welfare receipt.

Although there is no typical pattern of welfare receipt during the childhood years, most children's exposure to welfare is episodic, and the years of receipt tend to occur together within stages of development. Greg Duncan of Northwestern University presented findings (Yeung et al., 1996) that explore the effects of the timing in childhood of AFDC receipt on total years of schooling.[4]

Duncan and his colleagues found that the relative influence of welfare receipt on years of schooling completed and on the risk of nonmarital births varied according to the timing of that receipt—whether it took place in early, middle, or late childhood. Receipt during the early childhood years had no discernable effects on these later outcomes. However, for blacks, taking into consideration a wide range of selection factors (e.g., age of mother at time of birth, mother's education, mother's work hours, average family income), welfare receipt in middle childhood (ages 6 to 10) was associated with relatively few years of schooling completed and a higher risk of teenage childbearing compared with children who did not live in AFDC families during this period of development. For black children, spending middle childhood in a heavily welfare-dependent as opposed to a welfare-free home was associated with roughly one-half year less schooling and a three times higher risk of teenage childbearing.

[4]The study used data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (a representative sample of children born between 1967 and 1973 and observed between birth and at least age 20), which provides longitudinal histories of AFDC receipt and a measure of children's completed years of schooling.

Demonstration Project
New Hope Project

The New Hope Project is designed to test a work-based solution to the problems of poverty and welfare dependency (Schulz and Huston, 1996). Conducted by New Hope Project, Inc., a nonprofit organization organized in 1991 to run the initiative, the project offers participants wage supplements that bring their incomes above the poverty level if they work 30 hours or more per week. Participants who are working also receive subsidies for health insurance and child care. Community service jobs are made available for those unable to find other employment.

To gauge the project's effectiveness, applicants were randomly assigned to a participants' group or a nonparticipants' control group. All participants will be interviewed in 2 years to assess such economic outcomes as work and income. Evaluators will determine whether the effects of New Hope extend to benefits to participants' children and to effects on family life. For example, the increased income, subsidized health insurance, and child care assistance provided by New Hope may translate into more material resources and reduced psychological stress for parents; families with children ages 3 to 12 will be interviewed about family life, children's experiences, and children's development.

The evaluation is being designed in continuous collaboration between the researchers, the program staff, and New Hope participants to ensure that the research is rigorous and that the measures selected and the processes used in data collection are appropriate to the cultural and social values of program participants. Evaluation is expected to include measures in four broad areas: parents and family, contexts in which children live, children's experiences, and child outcomes. The project's goal is to go beyond outcomes to understanding the processes by which change, or lack of change, comes about.

Duncan speculates that such effects may be attributable to the fact that middle childhood and early adolescence are stages at which children, having begun to perceive of welfare receipt as a viable future life course, may start to engage in behaviors—such as early sexual activity, disengagement from school, and problem behavior—that foreclose other options. It is during the middle and high school years that children form aspirations for the future and model parents' experiences in education and employment. This is also a time when parents can begin to connect children to activities that foster career aspirations, which may not be as accessible to families on welfare. Early in childhood, welfare receipt may supply needed income and little stigma and not lead to negative outcomes; in contrast, welfare receipt in middle childhood and adolescence may be detrimental.

It is critical to note that the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) lacks measures of the home environment, parenting skills, and parents IQ and mental health. As a result, it is not possible to distinguish statistically between the effects on child development of welfare receipt and those of these other conditions. If, for example, it could be established that welfare undermines families' efforts to provide rich learning environments for their children and that these learning environments are the "true" cause of children's later educational attainment and fertility, then any efforts to interpret the PSID findings as supporting a causal link between welfare, schooling, and childbearing would be inappropriate. At a minimum, Duncan's and his colleagues' findings suggest that concerns about how children are affected by welfare need to be balanced with considerations of how older children are affected as they begin to aspire to and prepare for adult roles.

Findings presented by Mark Rosenzweig of the University of Pennsylvania (Rosenzweig, 1995) also bear on efforts to specify more carefully those for whom welfare is most likely to have negative long-term effects. Rather than inquiring about the stage of childhood in which welfare receipt occurs, Rosenzweig examined whether young AFDC recipients' access to other sources of financial support affects their initial decisions to have children without marrying.

Rosenzweig first examined the relationship between state AFDC benefit levels and rates of nonmarital childbearing among young women on AFDC, using data from eight birth cohorts of women in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Like other investigators who have studied this relationship, he found little evidence connecting average AFDC benefits to differential rates of nonmarital fertility in general.

Rosenzweig then examined whether young women on AFDC who differed with respect to their parents' earnings at age 14 were more or less likely to have children without marrying by the time they were 22. He found that higher AFDC benefit levels increased the probability of nonmarital childbearing for those women whose parents' in-

comes were less than $10,000 per year (about one-quarter of his sample). For women whose parents had higher incomes, variation in state benefit levels did not affect the likelihood of nonmarital childbearing.

Rosenzweig concluded that early childbearing is most likely to be associated with higher AFDC benefit levels when other potential or actual sources of support, such as monetary donations from parents, are meager. At the same time, Rosenzweig cautioned that welfare generosity alone cannot explain contemporary trends in nonmarital births, and the magnitude of the relationship between welfare and out-of-marriage childbearing is a matter of active debate. (For a discussion about the determinants of early childbearing as a selection factor, see Geronimus and Korenman, 1992; Furstenberg et al., 1993; and Hoffman et al., 1993.)

Research by Mark Rank of Washington University (Rank, 1996) extended the consideration of long-term effects to an intergenerational framework. Policy makers and researchers alike have long questioned whether welfare receipt in childhood predisposes welfare receipt in adulthood. Rank sought to determine whether welfare dependency or poverty is the mechanism that underlies patterns of intergenerational welfare receipt.[5]

Rank found that 75 percent of people on welfare did not report growing up in households that received welfare (though underreporting of parental welfare receipt is quite likely). However, he also found that children who *did* grow up in families that received welfare were at least three times more likely to receive welfare when they become adults than children not raised in welfare families; see Table 2.

Rank's efforts to identify the reasons for this intergenerational pattern of welfare receipt highlight the effects of poverty on families' ability to help their children succeed in school, work, and society as a whole, rather than the direct effects of welfare dependence. The effects of parental welfare receipt disappeared when family income was taken into account. Rank concluded that the financial and economic constraints that accompany poverty, regardless of welfare receipt, set in motion influences that place children at risk of future welfare dependency. But there was one important exception to this conclusion: Rank found that welfare receipt as a child had a modest effect on the person's probability of having children as a single parent, even when parents' economic backgrounds were taken into account.

Considered together, the findings reported at the briefing point to welfare receipt during the preteen and adolescent years, and to consequences for school completion and premarital childbearing, as areas of concern and hence, future study. Additional questions for further study include: What devel-

[5]Rank used data from the National Survey of Households and Families, a cross-sectional study comprising more than 13,000 respondents.

Table 2

Individual's Welfare Use Percentages by Parent's Welfare Use, in Percent
(total numbers in parentheses)

Individual's Welfare Receipt	Parent's Welfare Receipt			
	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Total
During last year				
Yes	3.6	9.5	16.4	4.4
No	96.4	90.5	83.6	95.6
Total	100.0 (10,807)	100.0 (882)	100.0 (297)	100.0 (11,986)
During at least one of the last 6 years				
Yes	7.1	18.0	30.7	8.5
No	92.9	82.0	69.3	91.5
Total	100.0 (10,779)	100.0 (882)	100.0 (297)	100.0 (11,957)
During 4 or more of the last 6 years				
Yes	2.2	6.1	17.2	2.9
No	97.8	93.9	82.8	97.1
Total	100.0 (10,779)	100.0 (882)	100.0 (297)	100.0 (11,957)

SOURCE: Rank (1996:Table 2). Reprinted with permission.

opmental processes during the middle childhood and adolescent years may leave children vulnerable to long-term negative effects of welfare receipt? As welfare reform proceeds, how should policy makers and researchers reformulate questions about how families' economic resources affect the course of children's development and future prospects? Do different mixes of financial support (e.g., public benefits, earnings, child support payments, donations from parents) have differential effects on children's long-term development? What are the noneconomic mechanisms over time, such as role modeling, that may help explain links between young children's economic circumstances and later outcomes? What measures of which outcomes need to be developed to expand efforts to understand the long-term effects of families' economic well-being, including their reliance on public assistance?

Demonstration Project
New Chance Demonstration

New Chance was a national demonstration program of comprehensive and intensive interventions designed to improve the economic prospects and overall well-being of low-income young mothers and their children (Polit, 1996). The project, developed by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, was in operation at 16 sites in 10 states between 1989 and 1992. The program model was evaluated using an experimental design; more than 2,300 young women were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (the members of which were allowed to enroll in New Chance) or a control group (whose members did not have access to New Chance). Data for the evaluation were gathered primarily through interviews with the young mothers at the beginning of the project, 18 months later, and 42 months later.

One of the goals of New Chance was to improve the cognitive, social, and physical development of participants' children. Thus, the program included services intended to enhance the parenting and life skills of the participants, and it also offered developmental child care at many sites. Because of the interest in children, the follow-up surveys included measures designed to capture parenting behavior and attitudes, as well as child development outcomes. In addition, a teacher questionnaire was sent to the teachers of those children in schools or in a Head Start program by the time of the 42-month interview.

Overall, the evaluation did not show significant differences between the experimental and control groups. New Chance did boost participants' levels of receiving a GED (high school equivalency diploma) above those of the control group, but it did not help participants get and maintain employment or reduce their rates of welfare receipt or subsequent childbearing, and it had unexpectedly small but negative effects on participants' emotional well-being. In addition, few differences between the children of experimental group mothers and those of control group mothers were found. New Chance did not improve the children's preschool readiness scores, and mothers in the experimental group tended to rate their children's behavior more negatively than those in the control group.

These results are confounded by several factors. A wide variety of education and training programs were available in New Chance communities, and members of the control group participated in them in unexpectedly high numbers. In addition, because of absenteeism and early departures from the program, members of the experimental group participated in fewer services than anticipated. Thus, the results of this demonstration leave a number of questions unanswered, including questions about the actual differences in services received by those in and out of the intervention.

HOW DO CHILDREN FARE WHEN THEIR MOTHERS COMBINE WORK WITH WELFARE RECEIPT?

A major goal of federal and state welfare reform has been to increase the employment of welfare-dependent women. The new federal law encourages reforms under which women with very young children are included in welfare-to-work programs, in initiatives that limit the amount of time they receive welfare benefits, and in required unpaid work experience. Employment, however, has long been a strategy of survival for poor and welfare-dependent women, most of whom receive welfare for relatively short periods of time, and many of whom mix welfare receipt and work, some of which is "off the books." Two studies indicate that about one-half of all mothers work for at least some time while on welfare (Edin, 1995; Harris, 1993).

Previous studies on the possible effects of welfare receipt have tended to examine the effect on children of mothers' transitions on and off welfare, without considering the effects of maternal employment (instances in which mothers work "off the books" in such part-time and transient jobs as babysitting, sewing, and bartending, as well as those in which women combine AFDC and employment legally) and of unemployment. Consideration of this phenomenon is especially important given many states' experiments with income disregards, programs through which welfare recipients work and continue to receive welfare for a specified period.

Research presented at the briefing by Judith Smith and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn of the Center for Children and Families at Columbia University's Teachers College (Smith et al., 1996) considered the effects on children of mothers' combination of welfare receipt and employment.[6] The study found that children's development was not compromised when their mothers combined employment with welfare receipt. The researchers examined both the effect of maternal welfare receipt combined with employment and the effect of maternal welfare receipt without the supplement of employment on children's cognitive outcomes at ages 5. Specifically, the study compared the effect on children whose mothers were receiving welfare either with or without an employment supplement during a 3-year time frame with those whose mothers were employed and did not receive welfare during the same 3 years.

[6]The work was based on a study that used the Infant Health and Development Program data set, a sample of 553 low birthweight, preterm children who were 5 years old on assessment, 75 percent of whom were black, and the National Longitudinal Survey-Child Supplement, a sample of 1,736 5- and 6-year-olds, 51 percent of whom were black. For both data sets, the receipt of welfare and maternal reports of employment were calculated for the child's first, second, and third years of life; the sample was limited to families living below 200 percent of the poverty line.

Children whose mothers received welfare and were employed exhibited more positive outcomes on measures of verbal ability and reading achievement than children whose mothers received welfare but were unemployed. This finding took into account mother's education, race, age at birth of child, family income over the first 3 years of the child's life, and the child's gender, health status, and birthweight. The outcomes for children in families receiving welfare in which the mother worked, although worse, did not differ significantly from those of children in families in which the mother worked but did not receive welfare; see Figure 2.

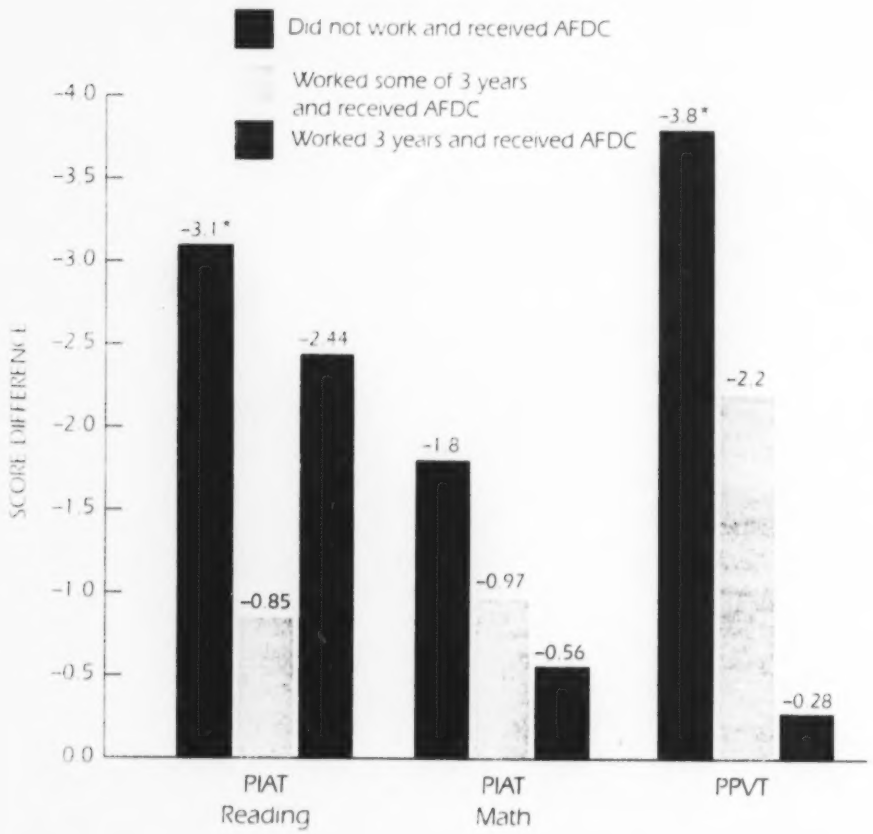
Importantly, however, Smith and her colleagues found that mothers who combined work with welfare receipt were somewhat better educated and had higher average incomes than those who received welfare but did not work, factors that were taken into consideration in the analyses. Thus, the researchers believe that a woman's education is important in explaining which welfare mothers are likely to enter the workforce without any government requirement to do so. Their findings also raise the question of whether welfare alone (compared with welfare and employment) is disadvantageous to children because families on welfare alone have less income or whether welfare as a *source* of income is problematic for children's development when not combined with income from work.

It is important to recognize that this research examined the effects of a mother's choice to *supplement* welfare receipt with earned income and may not generalize to programs that mandate work and simultaneously discontinue welfare benefits. A full picture of the effects of maternal employment among the poor also needs to consider the developmental effects of the child care arrangements that enable these mothers to work.

This research raises a number of questions: What role does the source of income (e.g., earned or welfare) play in children's development, in comparison with the level of income, regardless of source? What aspects of income (e.g., type, level, predictability) encourage families to save for such purchases as improved housing, better education, and cars that facilitate transportation to work and child care—factors that, in turn, may promote healthy development in the long term? How do child care environments mediate the effects of maternal employment among low-income families? How do the flexibility, stability, and timing (during the childhood years) of parental work affect children's development?

Figure 2

Effects on Children's Cognitive Outcomes
of Maternal Employmnent and Welfare Receipt, NLSY



NOTES: PIAT, Peabody Individual Achievement Test; PPVT, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. The effects are controlled for mother's education, family income over the child's first 3 years, race, gender of child, birthweight, and age of mother at birth. Sample is black and white 5-year-old children in families with incomes at or less than 200 percent of the official poverty threshold. The 0.0 point is reference group of mothers who worked 3 years and never received AFDC.

*Statistically significant differences between groups

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Demonstration Project
Assessing the New Federalism:
Effects on Well-Being of Families and Children

Under the auspices of the Urban Institute and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Assessing the New Federalism project seeks to assess the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states and its effect on children and families (Urban Institute, 1996). The project, which will last from 3 to 5 years, will monitor changes in children, families, and communities; track legislative proposals, policy changes, and developments at the federal level; document policy and program changes at the state and local levels; and measure and analyze changes in a broad spectrum of indicators.

The project will address those government programs that assist disadvantaged individuals, households, and communities and that are likely to change as a result of program devolution or budget reductions. It will focus on a number of key areas in which the new relationships among federal, state, and local policies will be especially critical, including health care, income security, job training and education, and social services. The project will monitor, assess, and report on the pertinent changes in the design, administration, and funding of such programs at the federal, state, and, when necessary, local levels. Reports on these fiscal and institutional changes will be issued annually. In addition, a combination of available government survey data and information from a 10-state Urban Institute special survey of households with children will be used to measure and assess changes in the well-being of children and families and to understand more completely how the health, welfare, and social service systems affect vulnerable families.

Both the descriptive and the analytic parts of the study require the development of outcome indicators of child and family well-being at the state level. This part of the project will rely on the outcome indicators used by the Casey Foundation in its Kids Count project and additional indicators to provide a broader profile of outcomes in certain areas. In addition, Child Trends, Inc., will collaborate in developing indicators and analyzing state-level data on children and families; the Urban Institute will retain a large survey firm for primary data collection.

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LESSONS FROM THE STATES

Researchers and state welfare administrators at the research briefing discussed efforts to assess child outcomes in the context of evaluation and monitoring. Participants raised a number of issues that merit attention in efforts to document effects of welfare reform on children and families, including:

- research that is context-based and longitudinal (e.g., that contains detailed case histories and follows individual families over time), so that issues such as age at which certain welfare effects show up can be determined;
- linking evaluations of welfare to evaluations of child care, child welfare, and related issues;
- gearing research to welfare administrators and caseworkers, not solely to other researchers;
- the use of state administrative and program management information systems as sources of data;
- research instruments that are adapted, through processes that involve program (AFDC) participants, to the populations planned for study;
- assessing those outcomes that are most likely to be affected by the reforms under consideration (e.g., school-age children's attitudes toward work in relation to their IQs) in order to obtain useful and accurate assessments of effects;
- documenting clear links between the goals of "producing successful 22-year-olds" and earlier outcomes proposed for measurement in evaluation protocols (as an element of convincing state legislators and others about the value of conducting child assessments);
- studying how families change when they get off welfare and enter the workforce;
- helping interviewers ask the right questions and sensitizing interviewers and parents to issues surrounding confidentiality in questioning; and
- coordinating research and evaluations of welfare programs across states, as well as sharing information among researchers, caseworkers, policy makers, and others involved with welfare and children's development.

Furthermore, as states enact welfare reforms, participants suggested it is essential to be aware of the following issues:

- Successful welfare-to-work programs may well move parents who are able to become partially or wholly self-sufficient off the welfare roles, leaving behind a much more disadvantaged group that needs considerably more intense services.
- Among populations that may be on welfare for a long time, it is important to identify the barriers to job readiness (e.g., domestic violence, substance abuse) and consider how they can be overcome.
- State and national databases have been developed in the context of a voluntary environment of welfare receipt, not mandated programs; thus, one must question their pertinence to efforts to under-

stand or anticipate the effects of contemporary welfare policies.

- Changes in welfare programs pose challenges to research design and methodology; for example, it may be more practical to administer assessment measures in field settings without sophisticated testers and to develop data systems from the bottom up, using trained social workers as data gatherers.

- Evaluations of welfare reform should not narrow the lens so much that issues such as health care, nutrition, and child welfare are left unconsidered, and the same measures that are used for welfare reform should be used for policies and programs for systems integration and family preservation initiatives (which currently lack child outcome measures).

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